03/28/24 BIG PHARMA

Moderna Secures $750 Million From Blackstone Life Sciences to Develop Flu Shots + More

The Defender's Big Pharma Watch delivers the latest headlines related to pharmaceutical companies and their products, including vaccines, drugs, and medical devices and treatments. The views expressed in the below excerpts from other news sources do not necessarily reflect the views of The Defender. Our goal is to provide readers with breaking news that affects human health and the environment.

By The Defender Staff

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Moderna Secures $750 Million From Blackstone Life Sciences to Develop Flu Shots

Reuters reported:

> Moderna (MRNA.O) on Wednesday said Blackstone's (BX.N) life sciences arm would offer $750 million to help fund the development of its flu vaccines, bolstering the company's efforts to advance multiple vaccines in the face of a steep decline in sales of its COVID-19 shots.
>
> Moderna is developing several new vaccines, including for cancer and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), resulting in high research and development spending. The funding will reduce R&D expenses, although Moderna said it still plans to spend about $4.5 billion this year.

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Blackstone Life Sciences will get commercial milestone payments and low-single-digit royalties on the influenza vaccine as part of the agreement, said Moderna, whose current lone marketed product is its COVID-19 shot.

Moderna will also pay Blackstone a proportional royalty on the combination vaccine against influenza and COVID, if it is approved, based on the fair value for the flu component, Mock said.

Study: 'Gamechanger' Diabetes Drugs Cost up to 400 Times More Than Needed

The Guardian reported:

Drug companies are pricing diabetes medicines at almost 400 times the level necessary to make a profit, according to a new study.

Researchers said it would also be possible for modern insulin pens, which are safer and offer more accurate doses than vials and syringes, to be used even in low-income countries if pharmaceutical firms "put people before their astronomical profits".

The study used data on the costs of ingredients, packaging and logistics to calculate the potential price at which companies could make a profit, as well as paying taxes. The researchers concluded that GLP-1s could be sold at a profit of U.S.$0.89 (71p) a month, but found prices ranging from $38.21 to $353.74.

"Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk can in no way supply the world with the amount of these medicines needed to meet global demand, so they must immediately relinquish their stranglehold and allow them to be produced by more manufacturers around the world."

Sanders Calls for Novo Nordisk to Slash Ozempic, Wegovy Prices

The Hill reported:

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) called on pharmaceutical manufacturer Novo Nordisk to slash prices for two of its drugs Wednesday, citing a new study on the costs to manufacture the medications.

The research found that a weekly injection of semaglutide — which is the generic name for Ozempic — can be manufactured at a cost between $0.89 and $4.73 per month.

"Today, a new Yale study found that Ozempic costs less than $5 a month to manufacture. And yet, Novo Nordisk charges Americans nearly $1,000 a month for this drug, while the same exact product can be purchased for just $155 a month in Canada and just $59 in Germany," Sanders said in a statement.

The monthly price for Ozempic is $935, according to Novo Nordisk's website. The manufacturer's weight loss drug, Wegovy, is also a semaglutide injection. Its list price is about $1,349 per month.

ADHD Stimulants May Increase Risk of Heart Damage in Young Adults

MedicalXPress reported:

Young adults who were prescribed stimulant medications for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were significantly more likely to develop cardiomyopathy (weakened heart muscle) compared with those who were not prescribed stimulants, according to a study presented at the American College of Cardiology's Annual Scientific Session.

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The study found that people prescribed stimulants such as Adderall and Ritalin were 17% more likely to have cardiomyopathy at one year and 57% more likely to have cardiomyopathy at eight years compared with those who were not taking these medications. Cardiomyopathy involves structural changes in the heart muscle that weaken its pumping ability. It can cause a person to tire easily and limit their ability to perform daily tasks, and it often worsens over time.

For the analysis, the researchers paired each person who had been prescribed stimulants with an individual who had not been prescribed stimulants but was as similar as possible in all other respects, such as age, sex and other health conditions.

Overall, 12,759 pairs were created and were followed for at least 10 years. Of these pairs, people prescribed stimulants were found to be significantly more likely to develop cardiomyopathy throughout the 10-year follow-up period, with the gap growing larger each year except the last two when it narrowed slightly.

J&J Can Contest Evidence Linking Its Talc to Cancer, U.S. Judge Rules

Reuters reported:

Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N) will get a new chance to contest the scientific evidence linking talc to ovarian cancer, a federal judge ruled on Wednesday, potentially disrupting more than 53,000 lawsuits the company is now facing over its talc products.

In a brief written order, U.S. District Judge Michael Shipp in Trenton, New Jersey, who is overseeing the lawsuits that have been consolidated in his court, said recent changes in the law and new scientific evidence require a fresh review of the evidence that linked J&J products to ovarian cancer. Leigh O'Dell and Michelle Parfitt, lead lawyers for plaintiffs in the federal litigation, said the scientific evidence that J&J products caused cancer is "stronger than ever."

"The truth of J&J's deceptive conduct to hide the presence of carcinogens in talcum powder and mislead the medical and scientific communities has only become clearer over time," O'Dell and Parfitt said in a statement.

The talc lawsuits had been on hold from 2021 to 2023, while J&J pursued failed efforts to resolve the litigation through the bankruptcy of a subsidiary company, LTL Management. Trials have since resumed, and the latest case ended in a hung jury on March 5. J&J will have until July 23 to make renewed arguments about the scientific evidence in the case, according to Shipp's order.

Millions in the UK Are Being Urged to Get Vaccinations During a Surge in Measles Cases

Associated Press reported:

U.K. health officials on Monday urged millions of parents to book their children for missed measles, mumps and rubella shots during a sharp increase in the number of measles cases and the lowest vaccination rates in a decade.

The National Health Service is launching a publicity campaign after figures showed there were about 250 confirmed measles cases in parts of England last year. Most cases were in children under 10 years old.

The combined measles, mumps and rubella, or MMR, vaccine is offered in the U.K. in two doses to all children, first at 12 months and then again at 3 years. Vaccination rates have dropped to about 85% nationally, and far lower in parts of London, according to U.K. Health Security Agency chief executive Jenny Harries.

More recently, declines in vaccination uptake were exacerbated partly by the pandemic and anti-vaccine sentiment, said Helen Bedford, a professor of children's health at University College London.

Altimmune Says Weight Loss Drug Minimized Muscle Loss in Trial Results, Which May Set It Apart

CNBC reported:

> Altimmune on Wednesday said its experimental drug helped patients shed weight but also minimized the loss of muscle mass in a midstage trial, a finding that could set it apart in a potentially crowded market.
>
> Altimmune is one of several smaller biotech companies that are pushing to compete directly with Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly in the growing weight loss drug space or to get scooped up by larger drugmakers that can help bring their treatments to market.
>
> The results are an early sign that the biotech company can address a major concern around those treatments, which have drawn unrelenting demand and investor interest over the last year.
>
> Some health experts have said that obesity drugs could shrink critical muscle mass, which could raise the risk of injuries and decrease strength.

TDF Lawsuit Filed Against Gilead Over Toxic Side Effects of Truvada, Atripla, Other HIV Drugs

AboutLawsuits.com reported:

> Two dozen plaintiffs have filed a lawsuit over Gilead's product line of tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF) HIV drugs, saying they suffered kidney and bone problems because the company sat on a safer formulation in order to maximize profits.
>
> The complaint was filed last week in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, naming Gilead Sciences, Inc. as the defendant.
>
> Gilead developed and manufactured Truvada, Viread, Atripla, Complera and Stribild, and promoted them as safe and effective HIV treatments, while creating an essential monopoly in the U.S. market. However, plaintiffs allege that the drug maker knew TDF-based medications were more toxic than they had to be, since Gilead was already aware of a safer alternative, using the HIV drug compound tenofovir alafenamide fumarate (TAF), which could be taken at lower doses and be equally as effective.
>
> Rather than fully warning about the risk of bone demineralization, bone fractures and other kidney side effects, plaintiffs have filed TDF lawsuits nationwide, indicating Gilead continued to sell the older drugs without accurate risk information, and delayed the development of the safer alternative, until the patent protections expired, further extending its monopoly of the HIV treatment market.

Strand Therapeutics Develops New Class of mRNA Molecules for Cancer

PharmaTimes reported:

> Strand Therapeutics, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) spinout, has developed a new class of advanced mRNA molecules for more targeted and powerful treatments for cancer.

The new class of mRNA molecules is designed to sense what type of cells they encounter in the body and express therapeutic proteins once they have entered diseased cells.

Set to begin its first clinical trial in April 2024, Strand will be testing a proprietary, self-replicating mRNA molecule's ability to express immune signals directly from solid tumors, including melanoma and triple-negative breast cancer, to elicit the immune system to attack and eradicate the tumor cells directly.

The company is also actively developing mRNA therapies that could be used to treat blood cancers and plans to partner with pharmaceutical companies, as well as investors, to continue developing drugs across a broad range of diseases.

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boxerdoglover
a month ago

Seriously? Moderna? You mean the company that basically belongs to Fauci that was ready to go bankrupt just before Covid, the company that never made anything of value or that worked, until he arranged for Moderna to make a "Covid" shot that didn't work either? No thank you.

5 0 Reply

Kim from Brooklyn boxerdoglover
a month ago

Yep. That Moderna....grrrr

0 0 Reply

John T. Vian

24 days ago

The only reason big pharma is getting away with big money is because most of the people of America are too ignorant to realize that their product is killing them. They spend their entire lives trying to get a cure to only getting a bad reaction from the vaccines prescribed. Yet it's never the vaccine that causes these bad reactions, as big pharma would have them believe. The insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting good results, whereas no medicine ever prescribed has ever given a cure...

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ettacat

a month ago

Blackrock? The Black rock that buying up all real estate so that everyone will have to rent?

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